



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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Paul V. Hogrogian
National President

USPS UNILATERALLY ANNOUNCES VERA

ELIGIBLE MAIL HANDLERS SHOULD BE FULLY INFORMED
AND USE EXTREME CAUTION BEFORE MAKING A DECISION



Timothy M. Dwyer
Secretary-Treasurer

On January 4, 2018, the USPS, without advanced notification or discussions with the NPMHU or other impacted Unions, unilaterally exercised its statutory authority to offer a Voluntary Early Retirement to eligible postal employees. To secure approval for offering this VERA from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the Postal Service took the position that dire mail volume projections and the Service's deteriorating financial condition require workforce reductions to match its current workload. Seventy-one thousand Postal employees are VERA eligible. Of that group, 5,579 are mail handlers and will receive VERA offers.

To be eligible, one must have at least 50 years of age with at least 20 years of service, or any age with at least 25 years of service. At least five (5) years of that service MUST be creditable civilian service, not military service. Employees may use military service to meet the balance of service required for eligibility.

The NPMHU does not believe that this "offer" will generate the actual retirements that are being projected. Of most importance, this VERA does not provide any substantive benefit or financial value. Mail handlers or other postal employees who accept this offer will simply be able to retire before they reach

the standard requirements for age and years of service; that is the gist of the offer. The USPS offered this VERA without monetary incentives because they had no other option. By regulation, to include a monetary incentive, the USPS is required to bargain the value of that offer with the Union and the Postal Service has no desire to bargain on this matter unless and until it is demonstrated that a VERA without an added financial incentive will be of little impact.

By accepting this offer, if you are an employee covered by CSRS, you will have your annuity reduced by 2% for each year you are under age 55. If you are covered by FERS, you will only earn 1% of your salary as an annuity for each year worked (e.g. if you worked 20 years, your annuity will be 20% of your high-3 average salary). If you are under the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA), you will not receive the Social Security Supplement until you reach the MRA. You will not receive Cost of Living Allowances (COLAs) on your annuity until you reach MRA. And with an early retirement, you can't make additional contributions to TSP or receive employer contributions as you would with continued employment.

If you are one of the five thousand mail handlers who receive a VERA offer, the Union encourages you

to analyze your annuity estimates carefully, to be certain about the effects an early retirement will have on your future. Mail Handlers are encouraged to take advantage of any counseling opportunities that are offered; don't make a hasty decision. For eligible employees who decide not to accept the offer, no response is required.

OPM's VERA planning guide cautions federal agencies about pulling the trigger on VERA offers prematurely, encouraging consideration of all alternative methods of obtaining adjustment to staffing. The USPS has issued hundreds of impact statements threatening involuntary reassignments, and facility closures or consolidations over the past few years. Despite this array of incomplete options, the USPS has now prematurely launched a VERA to those on the doorstep of retirement. The USPS has put the cart before the horse by failing to consider fully or fairly the impact of current and pending operational opportunities and the age of those employees affected.

Upon receipt of the VERA notification, the NPMHU immediately contacted the USPS to request a meeting to discuss potential impacts. In addition, we have requested copies of all relied upon information used to secure OPM's approval.

NEW MEMBERS ADDED TO COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE

National President Paul Hogrogian recently made two appointments to the NPMHU's Committee on the Future: Alex Cervantes, President of Local 320 (Arizona), and Kelly Dickey, President of Local 322 (Pittsburgh, Central & Western PA, and Wheeling, WV) will be joining the Committee.

"The National Postal Mail Handlers Union must be prepared to challenge the never-ending threats to our work and the services that we provide. The challenges facing the United States Postal Service and all bargaining unit employees are vast, but not insurmountable. However, the Agency's reliance on a flawed Function 1 scheduler analysis has, in part, emboldened the USPS to unilaterally exercise its Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), without consultation with the Union. This potential reduction sets the stage for continued threats of facility closures, consolidations and involuntary reassignments," said President Hogrogian.

It is imperative that we continue to challenge and oppose the threatened closures, consolidations, involuntary reassignments, subcontracting efforts, harmful legislation, and the degradation of service standards on all fronts now and into the future. Kelly Dickey and Alex Cervantes bring a plethora of experience to the table and we are honored to have them join the Committee. The COTF will next meet in July of 2018. "I am confident that the addition of Kelly and Alex will serve to sustain the expertise and forward-thinking

capabilities of the group into 2018 and beyond," said Hogrogian.

Alex Cervantes began his career with the Postal Service in 1996, where he immediately took an interest in the Local Union. Alex jumped right in by becoming a Union steward in 1996. Accumulating experience along the way, he progressed to Chief Steward, Dispute Resolution Committee Representative, Editor of the Local Union's newsletter, and shop steward trainer. In 2002, Alex was elected to the position of Vice President. He also served the membership as local Manager of Contract Administration, LMOU negotiations Committee Representative and Arbitration Advocate. In 2014, Brother Cervantes reached the pinnacle with his election as Local 320 President, a position that he has held since.

Brother Cervantes has served the membership as an elected Delegate to LiUNA and NPMHU Conventions, most recently serving as a member of the Credentials Committee in 2016. Alex holds an Associate's Degree from Cerritos College and has attended training at the George Meaney College for Labor Law. He is a proven leader and will be an asset to the Committee.



Alex Cervantes
President, Local 320



Kelly Dickey
President, Local 322

Kelly Dickey began her career with the United States Postal Service in 1998 as a mail handler in the Pittsburgh P&DC. She quickly expressed a desire to work for the betterment of others. Seventeen years ago, Kelly became a Union Steward in Local 322. Through training and perseverance, she eventually secured her first officer position – Branch President of the Pittsburgh P&DC. For nearly two decades, Kelly has acquired much experience in a variety of steward and arbitration training sessions. In addition, Sister Dickey has completed FMLA and Leadership training. Kelly is a staunch advocate for workplace safety and represents the Union on the area Postal Safety Committee. Kelly's experience and knowledge have served the members of Local 322 well. She was recently elected to her second consecutive term as Local 322 President.

Sister Dickey holds a B.S. in Natural Science and a B.A. in Education. She is a skilled arbitration advocate and has represented members in hearings on a variety of issues, most prominently including disciplinary matters, CIO cases, cross craft enforcement, and career conversion cases. As a Delegate to the 2016 Convention, Kelly served on the Resolutions Committee and was recently appointed to the NPMHU Women's Caucus.

Please join the NPMHU in congratulating Alex and Kelly on their appointment to the Committee on the Future.



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